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## **Maryland State House Restoration Receives Award from American Institute of Architects DC Chapter**

(Baltimore, MD) -- A State House restoration project that allows visitors to enjoy what was once a missing piece of Maryland history has been recognized by the DC Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). The re-creation of the Old House of Delegates Chamber has received an Award of Merit in Historic Resources for restoring the chamber to how it appeared during the high Victorian period of the late 19th century. The Maryland Department of General Services (DGS) commissioned Beyer Blinder Belle Architects and general contractor The Christman Company for the project which was completed in 2012. DGS was also assisted by the Maryland State Archives and the Office of the Speaker of the House.



Old House of Delegates Chamber Renovation Overseen by DGS  
Photography by: Joseph Romeo Photography  
Courtesy of Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners LLP

“Walking into the Old House of Delegates Chamber is like taking a step back in time,” said DGS Secretary Alvin C. Collins. “Visitors can now see the Maryland history that was once lost to generations. The AIA award represents the diligence of all who worked on the project and reflects DGS’ commitment to Doing Great Service for Maryland and its citizens.”

The oldest State capitol still in continuous legislative use in the country, the Maryland State House was completed in 1779. A century later, the House of Delegates Chamber was redesigned in the elaborate Victorian style of that era as part of a building-wide renovation. Legislators meeting in the Old House Chamber adopted the constitution of 1864 that ended slavery and, three years later, approved a new State constitution that is still in effect today.

“The restoration gives context to the important history that was made in the Old House of Delegates Chamber during the late 19th century,” said House Speaker Michael E. Busch. “It’s a window to the past that gives us insight into the present.”

When an addition was built in 1905, the House of Delegates Chamber was moved and in the ensuing years the room was stripped of its historic elements.

Those who worked on the restoration project acted as history detectives, analyzing photographs and written records to determine the original materials and furnishings that needed to be replicated. Ornate carpeting, drapes, desks, and a rostrum were all custom-made. Modern day technology and safety features were also added, but are concealed by decorative elements within the architecture of the chamber.

“We were honored to work with DGS and Maryland State Archives on such significant and rewarding restoration,” said Hany Hassan, FAIA Partner of Beyer Blinder Belle Architects.

The Old House Chamber provides visitors with a better understanding of the noteworthy events that have taken place in the State House, and is also used for meetings and receptions.

DGS is currently overseeing a restoration of the Old Senate Chamber which is scheduled to be completed by December 2014. Both the Old House of Delegates Chamber and Old Senate Chamber renovations are part of the Visitor Experience Master Plan which separates the first floor of the State House into four zones, with each zone interpreting a century of history. The Old Senate Chamber represents the 18th century, the Old House of Delegates the 19th century, while the current legislative chambers tell the story of the 20th and 21st centuries.